

March 5, 2018

The Honorable Seema Verma
Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

RE: Comments Regarding 2019 Proposed Changes to Medicare Advantage

Dear Administrator Verma,

I am an 83-year-old retiree enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan concerned that the Administration's proposed cuts to Medicare Advantage retiree coverage could put at risk health benefits that I depend on for quality care.

For 33 years I worked for Verizon where I went from climbing telephone poles and ended up in middle management before retiring. Retirees like myself depend on Medicare Advantage for access to vision, hearing, and dental benefits.

Access to vision benefits is particularly important to me since I was diagnosed with macular degeneration about nine years ago. Macular degeneration is an incurable eye disease that causes loss in the center of the field of vision. It is caused by the deterioration of the central portion of the retina which controls our ability to read, drive a car, or recognize faces or colors. Over the years, objects have gotten gray and cloudy as my condition has gotten steadily worse. Many elderly people go legally blind because of it.

Having macular degeneration requires regular trips to a specialist to help slow down the progression of the disease. I am enrolled in United Healthcare Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) plan offered for Verizon retirees. With this plan, I only need to pay a \$15 co-pay each time I visit a specialist. The plan also does pay for one annual visit to an eye doctor for an eye exam and refraction test, which is a routine eye exam to measure a person's need for a new prescription for eyeglasses. Visits to family practitioners involve no co-pay at all.

I know that traditional Medicare does not include any vision benefits, so I appreciate not having to pay high out of pocket costs to see the eye doctor as I am on a fixed income. As a senior who relies on Medicare Advantage and all the critical benefits it provides, I want to know that our policymakers in Washington are committed to ensuring affordable, comprehensive care for retirees.

Retirees like myself cannot afford to lose access to the important benefits provided under Medicare Advantage.

Sincerely,

James Moehnke
12303 W Titan Ct
Sun City West, AZ, 85375